/132 cont./

844 diet and the magic preventatives required for a healthy baby and an easy delivery; they also often have a knowledge of the properties of certain herbs of which they make frequent use in the exercise of their profession, as well as the magic requisites necessary to counteract the ill-effects of the violation of some taboo during the period of pregnancy, a transgression which may cause abnormally long labor.

For this reason their services are very efficient and highly valued by the community; on their expertness and the success of the cases they handle during their career depend their reputation, their popularity, and the fee they receive.

[554] The midwife's position is an honorable one. Hers is not an occupation that can be looked down on; although it is not practiced by women of high class, it does give those who exercise it a certain elevation in their familial and general status.

Prior to the birth an arrangement is made regarding the services of the midwife. She is paid according to the economic capacity of the future mother, adding something more to the agreed-on fee when the delivery happens to be extremely prolonged and difficult, that is, when it requires greater effort and assistance than the normal case. The usual payment includes a length of material for a robe (ten yards) of the color and quality requested by the midwife; several bottles of rum (five or more), some ornament, etc. The midwife's request is not always the same but varies in accordance with her personal needs at the time. Also she must be well fed all the time that her presence is necessary in the home of the mother.

846 Postnatal regimen. Guajiro mothers follow a special regimen
556 which is in accordance with their social position. Those of strong clan groups who have at their disposal a large number of women servants and slaves can enjoy /133/ the luxury of remaining undisturbed without being bothered by any domestic duties, aided by their maternal kinswomen or those who replace these in caring for them. Guajiro women say that when the first child is born it is customary for the mother to remain in bed and out of the sunlight

/133 cont./

●846 556 for one month, taking light food such as thin mazamorros with milk, cojosa /chicha made of sour milk/, etc.; to be bathed with hot water at daybreak by her kinswomen or by the midwife, who also take charge of the newborn child and of all domestic activities. As the first delivery takes place in the home of her uterine kinswomen, these activities naturally are reduced to a minimum. When the second child arrives, if the delivery has been easy, the period of care is shortened, and in the following deliveries the rest period is restricted to what her domestic duties will permit, as then she gives birth in her own home and in many cases alone.

Among the poorer classes, in which the woman carries the burden of all the domestic chores, such as attending to her husband and carrying out economically lucrative crafts in addition to agricultural work and collecting, etc., the /special/ regimen followed by the mother becomes very attenuated. Her activity is not really interrupted except while she is giving birth and from that moment her normal life continues. In the hamlets on the outskirts of Uribia, we had the opportunity to visit two women who had just given birth. The births had taken place in an enramada /bough-covered shelter/, and afterward with the newborn babies in their arms, the mothers went about their ordinary household duties. They did not even protect themselves from the burning rays of the sun, as one of them was out in the open just at midday, cooking trupillo pods to eat and going about her other domestic work. In reply to our remarks on this behavior, she said that she did not feel in the least indisposed and she was not accustomed to follow any special regimen at all. We got the same reply from the other Guajiro mother, who said that she had gone on with her normal activities the same afternoon that she had had her child. One woman was from Jarara and the other from upper La Guajira.

G [55 cont.]
755 When the child at birth, or a few days afterward, is afflicted with stomach-ache and other characteristic symptoms determined by divination, the cause is that the mother during her pregnancy had imprudently eaten a watermelon which previously had been tasted by a fox. This fact having been proved by the art and talent of the diviner, she proceeds to carry out the cure of the infant, which consists of searching out a fox, killing and quartering it, separating the bones from the flesh and burning them and reducing them to powder. The powder resulting from this calcination is used to anoint around the child's anal sphincter after an evacuation. A part of the meat of the dead animal is roasted and is given [56] to the sick child. If both remedies are applied at the opportune moment, the child will rapidly recover – at least this is the Guajiro belief.

G It might be thought that in this case it would be logical
753 for the affected person to be the mother herself, as it was she
854 who ate the contaminated fruit, but one must bear in mind that to the primitive, the infant, as with us, is a relatively defenseless being. For this reason he requires greater protection, because evil things, due to his weak defenses, will readily make a prey of his small body. The evil things in this case are represented by the wicked spirits whose object is to spread sickness. To uphold our statement it is sufficient to quote the case of the
W Witoto Indians, inhabitants of the Amazonian selva, with their
846 social institution called the covada [couvade] and their general custom of covering their children's bodies with curly vegetable fibers to disguise them and give them the appearance of small monkeys. Let us see what couvade is: "The one most concerned with this affair" – the birth of the new child – "is the husband because it is he who has to bear the rigors of the strict diet involved. In practice, once natus est homo and the essential obstetrical duties are carried out, the Indian mother hands over the fruit of her womb to the husband. He takes charge of the infant and, acting as if he were the mother, takes it with him to his hammock where he stays for eight days, keeping to a diet which might well be adopted by the most fastidious lady. But before he does this he first of all puts on mourning, that is, he paints himself

[56 cont.]

84 black so that he looks like an African ... . During the eight days the Indian woman attends to all the husband's work in the sown fields, loads yucca, collects firewood, etc. Later the Indian, once he has finished his period of diet, rises from his hammock, goes to the river, and with a thorough bathing washes off the black ointment until he becomes clean again and his natural self, as they say, in Adam's clothing." (39)

39. Anonymous: Relaciones Interesantes y datos históricos sobre las Misiones del Caquetá y Putumayo [Interesting stories and historical data about the Caquetá and Putumayo missions], 2d., I, 36-37.

In this socio-magic incident of relevant importance, in which the missionary saw nothing more than a curious aspect of Indian life, what is shown is really a change of personality when confronted with an evil spirit: The man is transformed into a woman (at least he behaves like one, taking charge of the newborn child and carrying out the roles that a woman should perform during the eight days of regulation diet), and the mother behaves as if she were the father (also substituting for him in the work which is his responsibility), and all this is done with the 846 object of warding off evil spirits from the newborn child. In 854 addition to the father completes his disguise by covering his body with what [57] the missionaries called "mourning" [luto], that is, with black paint with which he anoints his whole body. Deceived by all these tricks carried out by both the parents, the evil spirits should not know where to find the baby — who ought to be beside his mother — and so he — the child — is safe from their evil influence.

854 But this system to protect the child does not stop there.
291 It continues, according to the missionaries, as "they take the child and until it is about two years old dress it in a garment so peculiar that at first sight one doubts whether it is a human being or not. They cover all its body except its face with the juice of a tree ... very sticky, and over this juice is spread

7:Bolinder T-5 (1920, 1955) 1957
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importance. Thus, while the child is on the way, he must not hunt with firearms, but only with bow and arrow. If he goes on a journey of any length after the child has come into the world, he must lay his saddle-girth round the babe or put his foot on its chest before he leaves. If he forgets to do that one can lay a pair of his old sandals on its breast. 843 [324]

If the first-born dies, it is feared that the others will do the same. The baby is placed head down in an urn with a lid and buried beneath a certain kind of tree. The mother often has to undergo another period of confinement, it being thought that all the rules had not been observed during her real period of puberty, and that that had an unfavourable effect on childbirth. If all the instructions are not observed, there is danger that the other children will also die. 766 844

My wife came back and told us that the child was born and all had gone well. It was the third child. The woman had lain on her back on the ground with legs straddled, and they had strewn a thick layer of fine sand under her crotch, so that the babe should land softly. An aunt of the woman's helped her, and her husband was there and helped to lift her and hold her during the final pains. The mother was now to keep quiet for a few days and, above all, not expose herself to the sun. 844

The old man explained that the rich let their women rest for weeks after giving birth, living on maize gruel and light food, while poor mothers have to go out and work as usual straight away. The child has the breast in the evening when the mother goes to bed; at three in the morning when everyone gets up, and occasionally during the day. In the better families the child is weaned with the help of maize gruel and goat's milk and a female slave takes charge of it, the mother having so many other duties. There are even some who keep wet-nurses, he said. 846 [556] 853

Then more men appeared and a woman who sat behind my wife, just outside the circle. I distributed tobacco and conversation became lively. My wife was surprised that Indian babies were allowed to sit upright so early. She was told that at first the mother supports it with her hand, and 854